

Main Street

MONTANA

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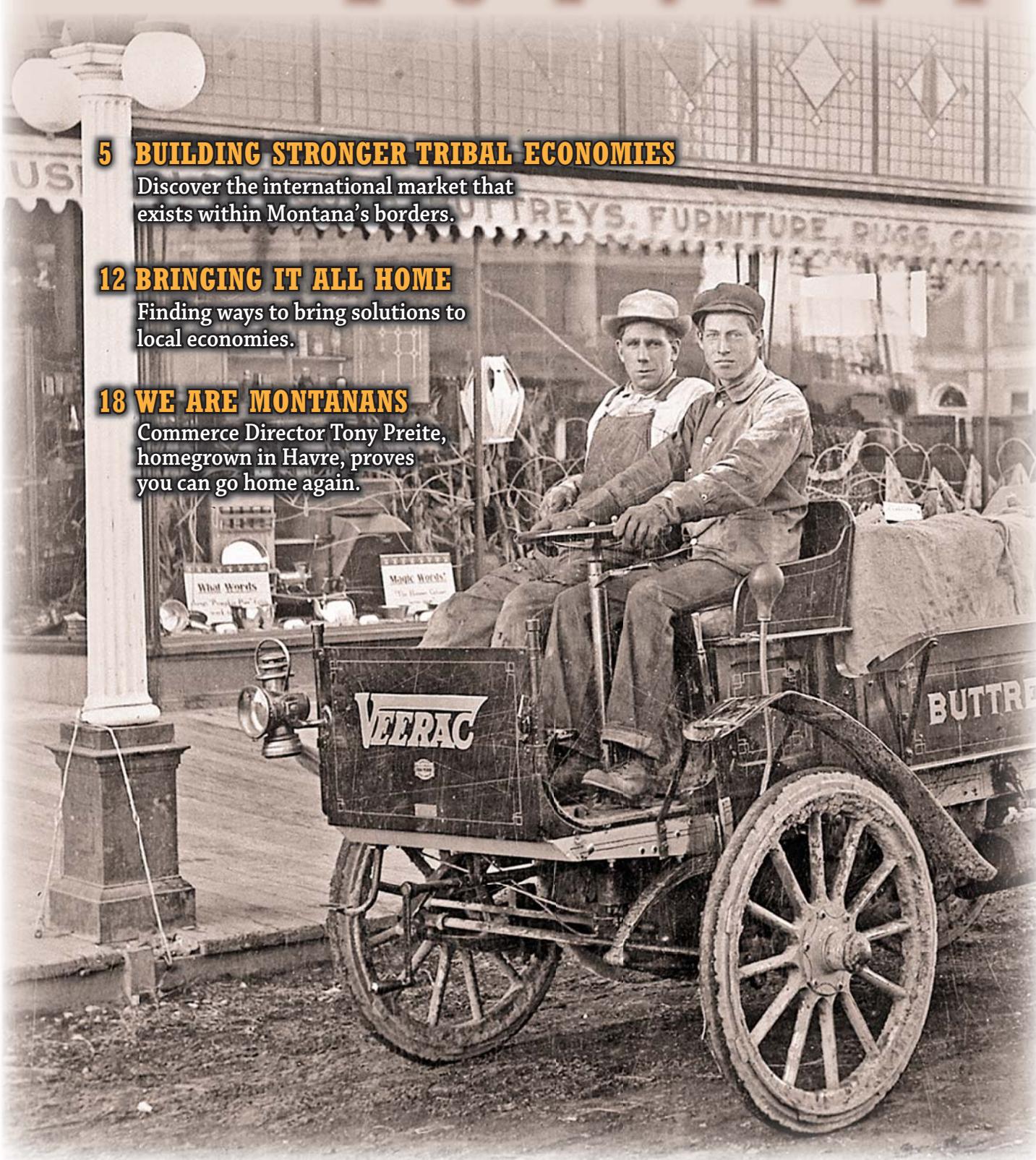
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Commerce Director Tony Preite, homegrown in Havre, proves you can go home again.





With this second addition of the newly revised Main Street Montana magazine, the Montana Department of Commerce is proud to join the fine work of the Montana Department of Labor and Industry. Governor Schweitzer has provided the leadership to use the resources of government in support of business expansion and economic development, and this publication is another example of this effort.

It is our hope that existing businesses, together with those that take root in 2006, will seize this opportunity to get to know a little bit more about Montana state government and the services that support our diverse business community. Nine out of ten Montana businesses employ less than five persons, and any small business faces special challenges to compete in the global marketplace. We celebrate the successes of our business community every day, and we hope to use this publication to highlight our state's many wonderful companies and organizations. If you have a story to relate, drop us a line at MainStreet@mt.gov.

For this spring edition of Main Street Montana we are highlighting a part of our state very near and dear to my heart: Hill County and my hometown of Havre. It has been said that Montana is 'one big small town.' I believe this to be very true and I take great pride in knowing that our work involves neighbors helping neighbors. We look forward to meeting and working with even more of our neighbors this year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Preite".

Tony Preite, Director
Montana Department of Commerce

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Buttrey's Delivery Wagon 1912, Havre, MT
Courtesy of the Montana Historical Society

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Marietta's Jerk Line Team for Hauling Grain, 1915 or 1916, Havre, MT
Courtesy of the Montana Historical Society



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Courtesy of Donnie Sexton, Travel Montana, Department of Commerce

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Havre, Montana, Bar Room scene, early 1900's

Photographer unidentified

Courtesy of the Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana

Back cover photo credit:

Havre Beneath the Streets, Bartender Chair

Courtesy of Donnie Sexton, Travel Montana, Department of Commerce



The Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity serves to advise the governor on policy issues related to economic development; lead the state's business recruitment, retention, expansion, and start-up efforts; and serve as the state's primary economic development liaison between federal, state, and local agencies, Montana tribal governments, private nonprofit economic development organizations and the private sector.

The Business Standards Division (BSD) adopts and enforces minimum building, plumbing, mechanical, electrical, energy, elevator and boiler codes for use throughout Montana; approves and certifies local government code enforcement programs; and consists of four bureaus: Building Codes Bureau, Business and Occupational Licensing Bureau, Health Care Licensing Bureau and Weights and Measures Bureau.

Business Resources Division (BRD) The Business Resources Division (partially shown) is comprised of a variety of programs aimed at improving, enhancing, and diversifying Montana's economic and business climate. Working closely with the private sector, the Governor's Office, our economic and community development partners, other department divisions, state agencies, and federal and private programs, the division strives to enhance the economic base of Montana through business creation, expansion, and retention efforts.



The Unemployment Insurance Division (UID) provides technical assistance and guidance to unemployed workers and employers to process and pay benefit claims and file quarterly wage reports in an accurate, efficient and timely manner. Unemployment Insurance is financed by employers and held in trust for workers when they are unemployed through no fault of their own.



Community Development Division (CDD) The Community Development Division provides financial resources and technical assistance to Montana communities to help improve critical infrastructure, provide for decent and affordable housing for low and moderate income families, revitalize neighborhoods, ensure community planning and growth management, and mediate impacts from coal or hard rock mining and related development.

The Workforce Services Division (WSD) provides all Montanans with access to a free labor exchange system, comprised of Internet resources and a network of local Workforce Centers, providing assistance to job seekers and employers who need to fill jobs in-state and nationwide; administers registered apprenticeship and training programs; offers assistance to individuals receiving unemployment benefits; and collects and disseminates labor market information and employment statistics.

The Governor's Office of Community Service (OCS)

is a diverse, non-partisan, Governor-appointed body representing a broad cross-section of community service interests and statewide leadership. OCS seeks to renew the ethic of civic responsibility by encouraging citizens of all ages and backgrounds to engage in service; involving youth in the life and work of communities; and expand service opportunities in Montana.

Editors

Christie Wolfe
(Commerce),
Andrew Geiger
(Commerce),
Margaret Ore
(DLI), and Michelle
Robinson (DLI)



BUILDING STRONGER TRIBAL ECONOMIES

Author: Major Robinson

As participants in the international market since the first day Europeans stepped foot on their tribal homelands, Indian Nations throughout history have been involved in economic development. History proves that the Indian Nations of Montana were involved with traders from three countries before Lewis and Clark trooped through their homeland

Governor Schweitzer said, "The first step in building stronger economies for both the State of Montana and Indian Nations is to forge a framework of trust. This is done by investing our time and resources to build lasting partnerships. Our mutual understanding of the business challenges Tribes encounter at home will foster effective strategies to address them."

Within his first six months of office, the Governor and his staff traveled to seven Montana Indian reservations for government-to-government diplomacy meetings. Additionally, Chief Business Officer Evan Barrett and staff from the Governor's Office of Economic Development were charged with viewing and hearing first hand accounts of the challenges Indian Nations of Montana face in developing their tribal economies today. Barrett and several staff members traveled throughout the state to meet with over twenty tribal-affiliated economic development organizations, from grassroots organizations to more structured public Tribal enterprises.

Tribal representatives shared essential information with respect to current economic challenges, resources, and proposed future growth. Tribal leaders disclosed their most viable assets --- the available human, natural, cultural and structural resources that each tribe possesses. They also outlined their concepts for economic growth and current projects in progress.

As early as 2005, the Governor began forming the foundation for tribal economic growth by ensuring the continued operational funding of the ten-member State Tribal Economic Development (STED) Commission. Originally established in 1999, the Commission, in jeopardy of being terminated, was continued for another four years and granted funding during the 2005 Legislature. The Commission's purpose is to provide a means for Tribal communities to work more effectively with the State of Montana to enhance and stimulate tribal rural economies.

The STED Commission is comprised of one representative from each of the eight Indian Nations in Montana and one representative each from the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs and the Department of Commerce. The STED Commission members include: Caroline Brown (Ft. Belknap), Robert Gauthier (Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes), Lawrence "Jace" Killsback (Northern Cheyenne), Marilyn Parsons (Blackfeet), Shawn Real Bird (Crow), Noel Sansaver



Blackfeet Nation honoring Governor Schweitzer

(Fort Peck), Jonathan Windy Boy (Rocky Boy's), Reno Charette (Crow), Coordinator of Indian Affairs, and Andy Poole (Dept. of Commerce).

"Tribes offer a unique opportunity for the state to build successful business partnerships, which in turn helps all Montanans," said Noel Sansaver, an Assiniboine/Sioux from the Fort Peck Reservation and Chairman of the STED Commission. "We appreciate the positive partnership we have with Governor Schweitzer's administration, but we are not looking for a handout."

"With the one million dollars in funding Governor Schweitzer successfully secured with the help of Commerce and the 2005 Legislature, we can significantly enhance Indian economic development throughout Montana," said Sansaver. Each Commission member, in partnership with their Tribal Office of Economic Development, has actively worked toward identifying their tribes' business development priorities for funding and has begun the process of leveraging Commerce monies with other funding to move proposed projects forward.

The STED Commission also helped sponsor the Montana Indian Business Conference in Great Falls in February 2006. The conference was an opportunity for Tribal, State, Federal, private lending institutions and private Indian and non-Indian business owners to network with one another on the topic of Indian economic development. The Commission arranged to have the event sessions filmed and made available to those who could not attend. The DVDs will be available through the Governor's Coordinator of Indian Affairs office.

"Montana's economy will never be fully realized until all Montanans are included in the economic picture," said Evan Barrett, Governor Schweitzer's Chief Business Officer, "and that includes all the Tribes of Montana."

For more information about the Governor's work with Indian economic development issues, please contact Reno Charette, Coordinator of Indian Affairs, or Major Robinson, Governor's Economic Development Specialist at (406) 444-3111.

SPECIAL DELIVERY

Author: Michelle Robinson

Helena Industries, Inc., a Commission of Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) non-profit organization, has been an integral part of the Helena community since 1970. Its' business offices and production area encompass most of the 1300 block on both sides of Helena Avenue, just down the street from the railroad depot. Established for the purpose of providing vocational training to persons with disabilities, Helena Industries, Inc. has grown considerably over the past 35 years and now serves more than 600 people with disabilities annually through occupations in wood products, textile production - Benchmark Manufacturing, contracted janitorial services, Document Destruction Services, and the Mail Center.

What began in 1971 as a work area called Small Contracts making pine cone jewelry and laminated key chains has blossomed into a fully automated mailing center. The Mail Center provides sedentary work for employees that have less tolerance for standing, lifting, or bending. Workers remain busy stuffing envelopes, stapling forms and labeling outgoing material.

"I like the people I work for in the Mail Center. I want to work here forever," exclaims Peggy Chilton, a 30-year employee of the Mail Center. Chilton enjoys assisting businesses with their mailings. She's very proud to showcase her expertise in labeling and inserting.

According to Commissioner Keith Kelly of the Department of Labor and Industry, the department initiated an agreement with Helena Industries' Mail Center prior to the first publication of the Main Street Montana newsletter in 2000. Today, roughly 25 workers can be found placing labels on 80,000 units of Main Street Montana annually. "We're certainly not the only business in town employing their services," said Kelly. "Helena Industries covers a wide range of Helena area business correspondence, processing two million pieces of mail a year." Bulk mail services and cost-effective piecework yields a high cost benefit to both the business consumer and the work center clients.

"We offer training and employment at Helena Industries through a multitude of programs at our main campus, as well



as beyond our physical borders," said Mail Contracts Manager Lois Ciske. "Our Job Placement program has assisted more than 125 people find or retain community jobs throughout Helena last year and provided case management services to over 475 persons with developmental disabilities in nine counties throughout our offices in Butte, Bozeman, Anaconda and Great Falls."

The Supported Employment Program provides job coaching at work sites to assist individuals in learning their occupational duties and maintaining their employment. Helena Industries' job coaches work with employers to locate jobs and match people with disabilities, based upon the skills and desires of the employee, to those jobs. The job coaches work with the employee to provide the training, assistance and support needed for the responsibilities and duties of the job to ensure success.

"Our newest program, Work First, serves people with more severe disabilities, but still provides them with the opportunity to work and earn a paycheck," said Greg Olsen, Director of Programs.

In an effort to expand their service base, Helena Industries began the new program of service in March of 2004. The program is designed for persons who cannot or do not wish to work in the community or in one of the three on-site production areas.

"It is based on Helena Industries' mission of providing jobs in a real work environment, but recognizes that not everyone can or wants to work in the more traditional services offered over the past 35 years," said Olsen. The program offers individualized vocational activities and options that are shorter in duration and/or simpler to complete, including an internal mail and office supply delivery, copying of agency documents, refilling and maintaining first aid supplies, and limited facility maintenance.

To learn more about the services offered please call Helena Industries at 406-442-8632 or visit their website at www.helenaindustries.org. Interested in contracting the Mail Center for your business? Contact Lois Ciske at 406-449-4465.

MONTANA CAMPUS CORPS - SPACEWARD BOUND

Authors: Molly Collins, MTCC Campus Corps Program Manager & Dean McGovern, MTCC Executive Director

Space travel is one of the most amazing technological accomplishments of human existence. When a rocket engine sparks an *action*; the resulting *reaction* thrusts astronauts off the planet to help us explore, discover, and learn about new places and things as well as reach a deeper

understanding of our own lives and environment. If Montanans are going to explore other planets, orbit the Earth, or employ space-age technologies right here at home, our youth will need high aptitude in math and science. In fall 2005, Nancy Reuter, a Montana Campus Corps member, ignited a spark that has introduced the excitement and wonder of space travel to schoolchildren in the Dillon community.

As a student at the University of Montana-Western, Reuter signed on with the Montana Campus Compact's Campus Corps program to serve her community and develop her own professional skills. She attended an Inland Northwest Space Alliance meeting, approached the Southwestern Montana YMCA for sponsorship, began developing a curriculum, and started recruiting fellow college

students to volunteer with her. "The results have been really amazing," said Roger Pelletier of the YMCA. "Nancy came to us wide-eyed and excited about this space curriculum. I told her that our community needed an after-school program for kids and so we gave it a try." Since then, Spaceward Bound has provided challenging, hands-on after-school activities including math, science, and engineering projects that have revealed the wonders of space exploration to youth in the Dillon area. The program uses various types of technology including computers, rockets, simulators, and programming robots to teach and tutor schoolchildren in math, science, and the principles of engineering.

Spaceward Bound allows traditionally underserved students in Beaverhead County to engage in activities, learn about future career opportunities available



The whole gang from the robotics session.

to them, meet real engineers, and foster strong math and science skills. Specifically, the program targets children in grades 3 through 5 and tries to maintain at least fifty percent female enrollment. Reuter says, "The kids that participate are all saying, 'It's cool to be smart!'"



*Mick Bowen and James
"The most excited astronaut I have ever seen!"
said Mr. Bowen*

Reuter's training as an MTCC Campus Corps member allowed her to develop a curriculum that builds on the students' natural curiosities and employs a discovery-based model tied to State and National Content Standards. After-school sessions have included topics such as Microgravity, Robotics, Aeronautics, and The Moon, Mars, and Beyond. At a special session, Mick Bowen, Aerospace Education Specialist at NASA's

Ames Research Center, captivated an audience of schoolchildren, college students, and UM-W professors with a lesson on the mechanics of robots.

Spaceward Bound is made possible through an AmeriCorps program grant to the Montana Campus Corps from the Montana Office of Community Service, a Division of the Department of Labor and Industry. Campus Corps is one of five AmeriCorps programs in

the state that receives corporation support for National and Community Service grants through the Montana OCS. In Campus Corps, members like Nancy Reuter can earn education awards for completing a set term of service to the community.

Montana communities benefit from the commitment and compassion of Campus Corps members. Whether they are teaching children to read in Poplar, collecting books for a school library in Butte, presenting the dangers of household chemicals in Kalispell, or launching kids into space in Dillon, MTCC's Campus Corps members are out of this world!

For more information about the Montana Campus Compact's Campus Corps Program, call (406) 243-5177 or visit www.mtcompact.org.

INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION

Author: Andrew Geiger

This place we now call Montana, has always relied on the land to provide for its people. While the original Montanans, the American Indians, did not view land as a *commodity*, it was the abundant resources that were used to care for one's self, one's family, and one's community. We need look only to the economical use of the much-valued buffalo, in which every fiber—and essence—of the animal was used for sustenance, protection from the elements and manufacturing. The topography of the land itself was used to harvest the buffalo. Necessity is indeed the mother of invention.



Photo courtesy of the National Museum of Natural History

A similar spirit is alive today in Indian Country as tribal officials approach complementary economic development. While the term economic development certainly means different things to different people, when listening to Tribal representatives one hears the voices of much earlier times. Economic development and community planning is a way to provide for family and community, always with an eye towards future generations.

"When you start talking about economic development, you've got to ask yourself what's most important, and what we value is helping people get a quality job or start a business so that they can take care of themselves and their families," Governor Brian Schweitzer said. "With our recent efforts we are looking to the history of Indian peoples to help all of us better understand this principle."

Last year, the Schweitzer Administration and the 2005 Legislature explored ways for the State of Montana to partner with these tribal initiatives, completing the process with the creation of the Indian Country Economic Development program. This program, administered by the Montana Department of Commerce, provides an equal distribution to tribal governments within Montana's eleven Indian Nations to be used for economic development activities as determined by Tribal representatives.

All Tribal entities are providing resources for the projects, and in most cases the projects are being enhanced by work that was previously initiated by the Tribes. State Representative Jonathan Windy Boy explained that the vision was to bring more partners into the process. "From the beginning we knew that this was not about the State of Montana coming in and taking care of all the issues. There are a lot of good ideas coming from our people, and a lot of hard work has already taken place, but



Photo courtesy of Donnie Sexton, Travel Montana

the challenges are large and many hands make the workload lighter," Windy Boy said. "We also know that improving the economy in Indian country has a positive impact on the whole state, and so this will continue to be a priority."

In addition to this funding, the 2005 Legislature passed House Joint Resolution No. 41, calling for an interim study to investigate both the special challenges and opportunities for economic growth and job creation in respective Tribal lands and reservations. The information collected will be reported back to the 2007 Legislature as they consider future projects. "I think the Legislature was very prudent and forward thinking with this strategy," Commerce Director Tony Preite said. "We've got to know where we are going and which roadmap we're using. The information coming from Tribal representatives will be invaluable to the next Legislature as we build upon previous years' efforts."

The Department of Commerce has already approved the six applications received thus far. While there is diversity in the types of projects, the common theme is to leverage a natural resource already in existence in the area. The Little Shell Tribe is proposing to expand on other regional tourism projects with a visitors' center and Tribal Capital located in Great Falls.

The Assiniboine-Sioux Tribes of Fort Peck are developing a manufacturing and information technology network holding company to encourage collaborative efforts among several successful ventures already in existence. The Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes of Fort Belknap want to expand a value added production company that supports the local ranching community. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in the Flathead Valley are using the funds to help diversify a current operation that provides welfare to work opportunities, and also address fire reduction in their area. The Chippewa Cree Tribe of Rocky Boy is in the planning phase of what they hope will be an ethanol processing plant using Montana wheat. The Northern Cheyenne Tribe is initiating development of a wireless communications company that will provide state of the art support to all levels of education and the business community.

The variety of the proposals and initiatives shows that there is not a one-size-fits-all solution for every community. "I am very pleased with the work of all of the Tribes. As one example, the Chippewa Cree Council is not only looking at assisting their community, but because we are talking about ethanol this means a positive impact on every wheat grower in Montana," said Preite. "This is possibly one answer to the current debate on energy, whereby one entity could potentially assist the whole country in reducing our dependence on foreign oil."

Alternative and clean energy sources that meet human needs at a sustainable pace and provides for future generations are a fitting tribute to the past for Indian peoples, and further proof that we can live with and from the land for generations to come.



Photo courtesy of the Billings Gazette

OF RESOURCE BUILDERS

CONTINUING TO “WOW” EMPLOYERS

Author: Lauren Wing

The first quarter of 2006 is a great time to start using WARP on the Web (WOW) to file Unemployment Insurance (UI) tax and wage reports online. WOW has experienced several improvements to make it easier for employers to file and pay UI taxes and submit wage records over the Internet.



“I just wanted to let you know how much I like the new web site to report quarterly wages... it was easy,” raves one happy employer. Employer usage of the program has more than doubled since the new version of WOW went live in June 2005. “We hope the number of users will continue to rise, and we have made even more improvements to help make it happen,” said Unemployment Administrator Roy Mulvaney.

The WOW application now allows employers to upload a text file containing employee and wage information. That’s right, employers can upload their quarterly wage listings from a text file with a .csv extension. A .csv file can be created in MS-Excel or by using the “Export” function of most accounting software packages. For more information and instructions on the WOW employee/wage file upload, log on to http://uid.dli.mt.gov/warp/WOW_Upload_Instructions.pdf.

If you would prefer a demonstration of WOW before officially registering, simply enter <http://uid.dli.mt.gov/warp/demo/logon1.html> in your browser. This demo shows seven of WOW’s screens along with a brief explanation of each screen and its functions. Go from logging in to making a payment with this step-by-step example of filing quarterly UI tax and wage information online.

WOW uses SSL/HTTPS and 128-bit encryption that ensures confidential information is safely transferred over the Internet so employers can rest easy as they make ACH debit payments online.

For more information, log on to <http://uid.dli.mt.gov> and click on the WARP on the Web icon or call (406) 444-6963.



REDUCING AN EMPLOYEE’S HOURS MAY AFFECT YOUR UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Author: Shirley Rush

An increasing number of unemployment claims filed in Montana are for partial unemployment. These claimants are required to be “seeking and available for” full time work. We rely on and thank you -- the employer community -- for providing unemployment insurance for your employees and ensuring its proper administration by responding to our requests for information.

Unemployment Insurance is provided to employees in the event they become unemployed *through no fault of their own or for good cause attributable to the employment*. The Unemployment Insurance Division investigates each claim, relying on both parties to provide timely and accurate information, allowing benefits to be paid correctly to those who qualify, and employer premiums to be adjusted based on claims paid.

A common misconception is that a person must be “completely unemployed” to qualify for unemployment insurance. Not so – a person may qualify if employed less than full time due to a work reduction by the employer. It is important for an employer to know that their account is charged for benefits if there is a reduction of 10 percent or more in the hours of an employee.

Employer notices are sent to determine both claimant eligibility and resultant employer charges. If no response is received from the employer, benefits may be paid out and accounts charged in error. Only those employees who have their work reduced by the employer should qualify for partial benefits due to reduced hours.

However, if a person accepts less than full time work, and there is no reduction or change in that job, that employer should not be charged for any partial benefits paid to the claimant. In addition, if the employee requests the reduction in hours, they would not be eligible for benefits, as the program requires a person to work all hours available to them. A person who works more than one job may have a reduction in one and file a claim. All employers will be notified – not just the one who reduced hours – so it can be confusing if you receive a notice. Your immediate response will ensure you are not charged if you did not reduce your worker’s hours.

More and more in today’s labor market, full time work is not readily available, or a job is considered to be full-time at less than 40 hours per week. Employers may very well have legitimate business reasons to reduce hours or hire for adaptive schedules. However, part-time workers may be costing companies in the long run, if they are supplementing their income with UI benefits.

You can help save money. When your company receives a separation notice, or a notice of a potential charge, your immediate call, fax, or mailed response will help us to protect the UI Trust Fund and administer timely benefits to those eligible.

HEARINGS PROCESS IN BRIEF

Authors: Terry Spear & David Scrimm

Decisions from various agencies within the Department of Labor and Industry affect employers and employees in many ways regarding claims of discrimination, collective bargaining and unfair labor practices, denial of or disciplinary actions related to an occupational license, the award or denial of unemployment benefits, wage and hour claims and the regulatory aspects of the workers' compensation program.

Should you feel that a decision was incorrectly made, Montana law allows you to file an administrative appeal, or contested case hearing before a Hearings Officer with Department of Labor and Industry's Centralized Services Hearings Bureau. The contested-case procedure was developed with the idea that an administrative hearing would be quicker, less complicated and less expensive than a trial before a district court judge.

While the hearings process is very similar in most cases, state law has provided different levels of formality and procedure. A hearing is your opportunity to present all information relevant to the conflict issues you wish to have determined.

"Last year alone the Bureau held impartial administrative hearings and provided dispute resolution services for more than 1,200 cases," said Centralized Services Administrator Tammy Peterson. "In order to create public awareness about the Bureau, we designed our website with an area devoted to different types of hearings and how to prepare."

With the exception of unemployment insurance benefit cases, most hearings are conducted according to the contested case provisions of the Montana Administrative Procedures Act or MAPA. The specific statutes may modify those procedures, so it is always wise to consult with an attorney should you become involved in one of these cases.

For quick tips on how to prepare for a hearing, research a decision from a prior hearing, or see the hearings calendar visit <http://dli.mt.gov/hearings/welcome.asp>.



ELEVATOR MECHANICS, CONTRACTORS, AND INSPECTORS WILL SOON BE LICENSED

Author: Jill Caldwell



Senate Bill 412, sponsored by Senator Vicki Cocchiarella in the 2005 Legislative Session, provided for the regulation of elevator mechanics, contractors and inspectors. The Department's Business and Occupational Licensing Bureau will oversee the licensing program, and the administrative rules specifying licensure requirements and fees were adopted in February.

The Building Codes Bureau of the Business Standards Division has issued permits and inspected elevators for many years. This new licensing program will close the loop on elevator safety in that all those who install, repair and inspect elevators will need to show competency to perform their work. These licensees will also be subject to the Division's disciplinary process if a complaint is filed against them. The Department expects approximately 75 applicants for licensure.

An elevator contractor is a person who engages in the business of installing, altering, or repairing elevators, escalators, dumbwaiters, or other equipment subject to the provisions of Title 50, chapter 60, part 7. The statute also allows for a limited elevator contractor's license for those individuals who install elevator equipment in private residences only.

An elevator inspector is a person who inspects elevators, escalators, dumbwaiters, or other equipment subject to the provisions of Title 50, chapter 60, part 7. These licensees must have met current national standards for the qualifications of elevator inspectors.

An elevator mechanic is a person who installs, alters, repairs, or tests elevators, escalators, dumbwaiters, or other equipment subject to the provisions of Title 50, chapter 60, part 7. These individuals must have completed an educational program, an apprenticeship program, or have verifiable experience in the elevator mechanic business. The statute also allows for a limited mechanic's license for those individuals who work only on elevator equipment in private residences.

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BUSINESS FACTS

BRINGING IT ALL HOME

*Author: Paul Tuss, Executive Director,
Bear Paw Development Corporation*

Assisting local communities in north central Montana in planning for economic future growth and community development is the number one priority of Bear Paw Development Corporation. Although we are based in Havre, we serve Hill, Blaine, Liberty, Chouteau and Phillips Counties, along with the Fort Belknap and Rocky Boy Indian reservations. We can't help but be optimistic for the future when we review the abundant resources available in this part of Montana. We realize that we can't do this alone. We must remain vigilant in continuing partnerships with our many hard working local officials to ensure success. Every project begins with a vision at the grassroots level. Our organization helps to provide some of the tools that are necessary to address the challenges we face in our neighborhoods, our communities and our region in order to actualize this vision.

What is truly innovative about our approach to local government assistance is that the same funding sources can be used for a wide variety of projects, depending on the needs of the specific community. For example, we were able to use Treasure State Endowment monies, in addition to local funds, to update the water lines in downtown Havre as part of the ongoing U.S. Highway 2 reconstruction project. Our failure to address this issue would have had a negative impact on all downtown businesses, and our local economy.

Maintaining quality infrastructure is the first, most basic step, to enhancing the economic health of a community. Planning for a community's future, however, is the most exciting part of our many collaborative efforts. In this arena funding sources play a significant role. In summer 2005, we were able to use CDBG-ED planning funds to hold a series of town hall meetings, from Glasgow to Whitefish, to discuss the importance of Amtrack to our region with Governor Schweitzer. You can never discount the importance of hearing collective concerned community voices and the impacts of relaying the stories back to Washington D.C. I think we all know what this service means to the Hi-Line. It was and continues to be the community involvement that makes the difference.

Another success story comes in the form of the planning grant that was used to assess the feasibility of constructing a new multi-purpose event center for Havre and the Hill County area. This facility will benefit the entire Hi-Line and will be a showcase example of community collaboration for the many Montanans who choose to visit. Rest assured we have big plans for this special part of Montana.

As Executive Director of Bear Paw Development Corp I invite you to visit Havre and the Hi-Line. To learn more about our services, visit www.bearpaw.org.



THE TREASURE STATE ENDOWMENT PROGRAM (TSEP)

Author: Jim Edgcomb

Through the people's vote on a 1992 legislative referendum, the Treasure State Endowment Program was created to assist local communities with infrastructure projects addressing serious health and safety needs. The program is funded through the earned interest on a reserved portion of the Coal Trust, with the principal fund remaining intact. The Montana Department of Commerce administers the program, working with local officials to correct major problems in cities and counties across the state.



State/Local Partnership

Local governments can apply for Treasure State Endowment funds to address impacts to citizens in areas such as public health and safety. As a result, more than 200 projects for drinking water, wastewater, solid waste and bridges have been funded over the years. Cities, counties, and water and sewer districts, especially in our rural areas, face real challenges as they see their tax base shrink due to a declining or stagnant population. With fewer people to carry the burden the (tough) choice becomes to raise local taxes/fees or let needed repairs slide, which ultimately leads to even larger and more expensive problems. TSEP provides a compromise solution that bridges the gap so that local taxes are not raised and businesses are not hurt.

Hill County Commissioner Kathy Bessette explained that in the past year two bridges in remote parts of the county were deemed unsafe and funding was not able to make the needed repairs. "What we were looking at was a whole lot of farm and ranch families who would need to travel much farther to get supplies, bring in crops, or reach medical care. Obviously this was unacceptable, and we were able to advocate this need to the folks at the Treasure State Endowment Program," said Bessette. "We're not going to let rural areas get disconnected from our cities here in Hill County."

2005 Legislature

House Bill 11 in this most recent Legislature authorized 40 Treasure State Endowment projects for the upcoming years in all areas of the state, and was signed by Governor Schweitzer on May 6, 2005. The grants range from approximately \$80,000 to \$500,000, for a total amount of \$15,968,253. It is after the session that the work really begins in earnest for local officials as well Montana Department of Commerce staff. This part of the job, working with people at the local level and getting to see progress made and problems solved, is the exciting part of the TSEP process.

Contact: Jim Edgcomb, TSEP Manager, (406) 841-2785

HELPING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Author: Gus Byrom



The Community Development Block Grant program, well known by its moniker CDBG, was started back in 1974 by Congress as a way to support local communities with critical infrastructure needs. The law states that all projects must be designed to principally benefit low and moderate income families.

Since 1981, when the State of Montana took over administration of the program for Montana's smaller cities and towns, CDBG has become a premier program at demonstrating intergovernmental cooperation from the federal government down to the local level. The program addresses such critical community needs as infrastructure reconstruction and replacement, housing grants and low interest loans to homeowners, and housing rehabilitation projects. For the fiscal year 2006, Montana will receive approximately \$6.8 million.

Local governments can apply to the Montana Department of Commerce for financial assistance with a wide variety of civic projects, including roads, bridges, water/wastewater, housing, non-profits, and community centers. The Department of Commerce also provides technical guidance for our smallest communities that may not have a full time planner. While CDBG projects are large in scale and time consuming by their very nature, there has been a concerted effort to try to take the red tape out of the process. Regional economic development organizations, as well as Human Resources Development Councils, also play a vital role in assisting local communities to plan and implement their CDBG-assisted projects.

What makes this program so successful is the control that is given to local officials. Before the state becomes involved, the local entity has typically committed considerable local resources, in time and money, to address the situation. CDBG funding kicks in when local options are exhausted, and since the program is implemented out of Helena instead of Washington D.C., more real dollars are able to flow to the local level. You can't open a book on public administration without seeing CDBG mentioned as a model of efficiency for government operations: it is literally the text book example of how to use state and federal resources to meet local needs.

Contact: Gus Byrom, CDBG Program Manager—Housing and Public Facilities (406) 841-2777

BUILDING LOCAL ECONOMIES

Author: Karyl Tobel



Experts agree that the first step in laying the groundwork for a community's economic success is making sure basic infrastructure is well maintained. Recruiting new businesses and maintaining existing ones requires good quality water and transportation systems, as well as community amenities. The Community Development Block Grant Economic Development program (CDBG-ED) allows communities to go a step further and provide funding that leads to job growth.

In keeping with the spirit of the original program, it is local communities who determine which types of projects they would like to fund based upon what is the best fit for their area. Grants and loans are awarded for such projects as small business loans for working capital or equipment purchases, grant funding for employee training, water or sewer improvements in support of an economic development project, or economic planning activities. Montana Department of Commerce staff provides guidance and oversight from the application process through project completion.

Since the program's inception in 1982, the Montana CDBG-ED Program has made over 180 grant and loan awards, creating over 4500 jobs in Montana. A unique component to the program is how repayments of the low interest loans are used. The state awards the funds to a local government entity, which then makes the loan to the expanding business. The interest paid back over the course of the loan stays at the local level to be earmarked for future economic development activities. From these awards, continued loan repayments have enabled Montana to provide over \$54.8 million in small business loans. The CDBG-ED funding invested in Montana has leveraged over \$256 million in other public and private funding.

Contact: Karyl Tobel, CDBG-ED Program Manager—Housing and Public Facilities (406) 841-2733

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HELPING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

TOP 10 PRIVATE EMPLOYERS

Albertson's



Independence Bank of Montana



Northern MT Hospital



Duck Inn Incorporated



Herberger's



McDonald's



Kmart



Gary & Leo's IGA



Havre Day Activity Center

Not pictured

Hill County Electric and Triangle Telephone Cooperatives



IN HILL COUNTY



HILL COUNTY AT A GLIMPSE

Author: Brad Eldredge

Total population: 16,376
(Census, 2004)

Median age: 34.5 (Census, 2000)

Median household income:
\$32,278 (Census, 2003)

Average unemployment rate: 4.7%
(BLS LAUS program, 2005)

**Top five industries in terms of
employment:**

- 1) Educational Services
- 2) Hospitals
- 3) Food Service and
Drinking Places
- 4) Executive, Legislative and
other General Government
Support
- 5) Religious, Grantmaking, Civic,
Professional, and Similar
Occupations

For information on employment
by industry, new businesses, labor
market information, job projections,
and hourly pay by occupation visit
[www.ourfactsoourfuture.org](http://www.ourfactsofourfuture.org).

Or call the Montana Department of
Labor and Industry's Research and
Analysis Bureau (406) 444-2638,
or mail: P.O. Box 1728, Helena, MT
59624.

TOP 10 PRIVATE EMPLOYERS IN HILL COUNTY

Authors: Andrew Geiger and Michelle Robinson

Albertsons

In 1939 a prospective grocer named Joe Albertson opened up a single grocery in downtown Boise, Idaho. "You've got to give the customer the merchandise they want, at a price they can afford, complete with lots of tender, loving care." Joe was quoted as saying at the time. Today's Albertsons as we know it has grown into one of the largest grocery chains in the country; and is one of the top ten employers in Hill County with about 70 employees.

Bill Filler, the Store Manager, explained that the full service Albertsons is a great fit for Havre because the company's dedication to its customers and its employees is very much like an old Hi-Line favorite: Buttrey's "In many ways it is a continuation of the quality people want, but also with many of the modern features current customers have grown to expect," Filler said. In addition to popular Albertsons brand items, customers respond well to the half-hour photo shop that allows people to develop their photographs as they complete their regular grocery errands, and also a Kodak machine for making custom greeting cards, school flyers, and other fun items.

Filler also emphasized that customer service begins with gaining the best quality employees, and he cited Albertsons proactive diversity program as being a big part of this effort. "We are proud of the diversity of our staff. We have an eclectic group of employees, and our Native American community is a very important part of that," he said.

Duck Inn Incorporated

This Havre mainstay has been a much-welcomed sight for weary Hi-Line travelers for over 30 years. The collection of establishments all started with the Tavern and expanded into the Sandwich Shoppe. Over the years the business grew to include the Mediterranean Supper Club, Vineyard Patio & Lounge, Olympic Room & Casino, Emporium Food and Fuel, the Havre RV Park, and the Best Western Great Northern Inn.

The 75 room hotel, newest on the Hi-Line, takes pride in making guests feel a little closer to home by adding a few extra touches. Parents can rejuvenate in the hot tub while watching the kids in the pool, business travelers can check e-mail and catch up with the office with high speed internet access, or weary tourists can stretch their legs a bit after a long drive by a visit to the fitness room. After a good night's rest, get started on your way with a nutritious and hot complimentary breakfast.

Janna Faber, the Chief Operations Officer, is proud to mention that they always receive high marks and several Directors Awards from the headquarters of Best Western. "The awards really speak to the quality of our staff. Corporate Headquarters goes over everything with a fine toothed comb to ensure quality, and at the end of a day we know our guests' comfort is in the hands of the hard work of the whole team," Faber said. It must be a good formula, because plans are in the works for a new suite style hotel and plaza with a view of the badlands. Check in at <http://www.montanaadventure.com/out/hotelinfo/3976.html>.

Gary & Leo's IGA

Gary and Leo's IGA was founded 20 years ago this June by Gary Leland and Leo Job and has grown over the years to be a full service grocery with all the modern amenities and services. Today they employ approximately 100 people. Store manager Tracy Job explained that being a locally owned business allows them to have a strong focus in all events in Havre. "Our owners and management believe that giving back is good for business, what we like to call a community of mutual interests," Job said. "The

people of Havre have been great customers for twenty years, and whether it's sports teams for the children, or a cultural event, we want to be a part of that and provide some support."

Gary Leland is especially proud of their involvement with the Boys and Girls Club, including recent initiatives to provide a conducive environment for teenagers during the after school hours. Gary and Leo's IGA shares this philosophy in how they handle teenagers who come to work at the store. Store management says that even if a young person is just with them for a short while, they work hard to provide important lessons of responsibility and accountability that will benefit them in future endeavors. Part time jobs are also a great way to get to know the business and learn about the diversity and specialization of the different types of assignments within a full service grocery.

IGA's national promotion is called *Hometown Proud*, and it looks as though the phrase is right at home in Havre. "The people of Havre are what makes this business really fun. I've lived in a lot of Montana communities, but I am really proud to call Havre home," exclaims Job.

Havre Day Activity Center

This innovative non-profit organization provides residential and employment opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities in the Havre area. Executive Director Dale Boespflug explained the general concept is to give people a chance to be productive in their community through providing much needed services. "The people we serve all have the same wants and goals that all of us do," said Boespflug. "They enjoy the experience of being productive, having a routine, and the feeling of accomplishment at the end of a good day's work."

In addition to housing with customized levels of independence, the employment side of the program involves furniture refinishing, recycling, paper shredding, lawn care and snow removal, and janitorial services; yet the organization prides itself in being flexible to take on any new task identified in the local area. Havre Day Activity Center employs 70 staff, in addition to the client workers, to fill the needs of many of the 24/7 positions.

Boespflug emphasized the incredible support in Havre for the program, citing the fact that they bring \$2.5 million into the local economy. "One of the key elements for any program involving developmentally disabled people is community inclusion. Getting these folks out and involved with everyday activities is the best way to showcase what they are able to give back. They really are wonderful neighbors."

Herberger's

Whether you are hoping to look your best for a special occasion, searching for an heirloom for your mother's kitchen, or just need a reliable winter coat when the wind starts blowing, chances are you'll find what you're looking for at Herberger's Department Store. Since 1980 it has been the anchor store for the Havre Mall, adding floor space over the years. In addition to a wide variety, Herberger's emphasizes the value of their products. They also feature the *Rewards Membership* program, in which customers can receive "sale day" prices to be used when they determine.

"We feel we can be even more competitive than stores in the larger cities. We offer the same great product lines, but here in Herberger's, chances are it's one of your neighbors that will be assisting you," said Store Manager Gary Peterson. "Havre is a friendly place, and we want people to feel at home while they're with us."



Herberger's employs anywhere from 40 to 60 people, adding staff as the holidays approach to handle the busy shopping days. The Havre Mall and Herberger's also take pride in serving communities far beyond Havre. People from all along the Hi-Line make trips to Havre for sporting events, visiting relatives, and appointments, and store management says people tend to drift over to Herberger's to stock up on some much needed items, and perhaps even indulge in a little item they've had their eye on. "People tell us all the time that they are from out of town and wanted to be sure and stop by. It makes us proud that we are a must stop for our neighbors down the Hi-Line," Peterson said.

Hill County Electric and Triangle Telephone Cooperatives

Five year veteran and Manager of Engineering and Operations Rollie Miller will tell you that Hill County Electric Cooperative developed a successful business model when it added on the telephone cooperative in 1953. The combined operation houses four high-tech, community minded companies and provides employment for up to 120 full time workers and three to four part time staffers. "We provide telephone service from Chester to Malta down to Big Timber and electric energy to roughly 9,000 square miles of rural terrain," said Miller.

Hill County Electric Cooperative was incorporated in 1945, just five years after initial start-up and two years prior to offering their first services. As a member-owned facility and non-profit organization they have experienced significant growth in the last five years with the additional electric load of three pumping plants from an oil pipeline running from Canada to Wyoming. Triangle Telephone Cooperative is also growing and entering into new lines of business, including high speed Internet and enhanced television service offerings via their digital telephone network.

Hill County Electric and Triangle Telephone are the last remaining jointly-managed electric and telephone cooperatives in the state and one of the few in the nation owned by the customers they serve. "We share management, equipment, office and storage space, as well as many employees," said Marketing and Sales Manager Christy Keto. "We are very proud of the synergies created 50+ years ago." To learn more visit www.mtintouch.net.

Independence Bank of Montana

A cornerstone of local economic development is solid, accessible local financing. In 1973, a visionary group of Havre business leaders recognized this tool and formed First Security Bank. They began with 12 employees and a mission to offer financial services in the area with a personal touch. In the following two decades the bank became a partner in many local projects and continued to support regional development. In 1998 the shareholders acquired two branches in Eastern Montana. Two years later they opened two additional branches and officially changed their name to Independence Bank.

Preserving the principles of its founding partners, Independence Bank's stockholder base consists primarily of local individuals. "We continue to grow and provide a strong financial backbone for the communities in which we are located," said Chief Administrative Officer Kay Mayer. Indeed, Independence Bank has grown to 75 employees in five branches covering Havre, Glasgow, Malta, Poplar and Scobey.

Independence Bank provides a broad range of financial products including checking and savings accounts, certificates of deposit, IRAs, ATM and debit cards, as well as on-line banking, bill-pay and other miscellaneous

services. Independence Bank has also become the leading lender for agricultural and campground loans. To learn more about the wealth of services available, log on to www.ibyourbank.com.

Northern MT Hospital

Northern Montana Hospital (www.nmhc.org) has been caring for patients at their present facility for more than 30 years. The current operation is a far cry from when the first Havre doctor began practicing medicine in 1892 in the community known as Bullhook Bottoms. Since that time, Havre spawned two schools of nursing and a trio of hospitals before growing into the 25-acre campus anchored by Northern Montana Hospital on the city's south hill.

As Hill County's largest private employer, Northern Montana Hospital has more than 420 full time staff and nearly 180 part time employees providing a multitude of services including critical care, surgery, pediatrics, labor and delivery, dialysis, home care and hospice care, rehabilitation, diagnostic imaging, cardiopulmonary therapy and rehab, behavioral health, diabetes education, and 24-hour ER. Physician clinics and a modern 150-bed care center for assisted living residents are housed in separate buildings.

"The support we get from the people of Havre and the surrounding communities, coupled with the dedication of our hospital staff, and latest technological advancements in medicine make Northern Hospital a quality healthcare choice for residents of northcentral Montana," said Public Relations Manager Kathie Newell.

Kmart*

Kmart Corporation is a mass merchandising company, providing work to more than 133,000 Kmart associates throughout 49 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands through its 1,479 Kmart and Kmart Super Center retail outlets.

On March 24, 2005 Kmart Holding Corporation and Sears, Roebuck and Company announced that they were combining Sears and Kmart into a major new retail company named Sears Holdings Corporation.

"As we go forward, we will continue to count on the dedication and hard work of Sears and Kmart associates," said Aylwin B. Lewis, president of Sears Holdings and chief executive officer of Kmart and Sears Retail. "The hallmarks of our new enterprise will continue to be performance and dedication to quality products and customer service, and we aim to instill these traits throughout our corporate culture."

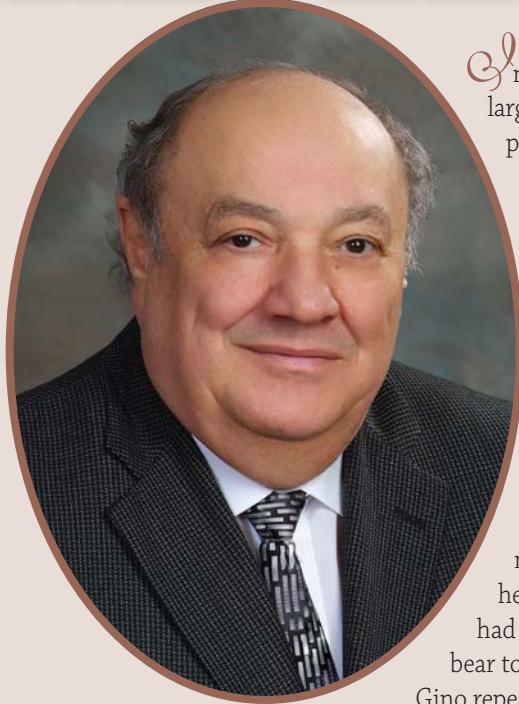
McDonald's*

"To be successful, you must be daring, be first and be different," said Ray Kroc. What began as collaborative discussions between milk shake maker, Ray Kroc, and burger brothers, Dick and Mac McDonald, in the brother's 1954 San Bernardino, California McDonald's, has blossomed into one of the fastest growing franchises of today.

From the first day's revenues of \$366.12 for the newly operated McDonald's in Des Plaines, Illinois 1955, to currently bringing in annual sales exceeding \$40 billion throughout 30,000 Kroc franchises in 119 countries, Kroc proves he was daring, first and different. Fifty-one years later, McDonald's proves record numbers of people are 'Loving it.'

*Specifics on Havre's private employers were unavailable, corporate websites were referenced for information contained therein. This list includes only private industry employers subject to Unemployment Insurance. Railroads and city, county, state and federal government agencies (including public school districts and universities) are excluded.

WE ARE MONTANANS REFLECTIONS



Tony Preite

*I*n many ways Havre and the Hi-Line of my youth forged me as much as the large influence of my family. Considering I am the son of enterprising immigrant parents, with three older brothers, this is no small feat! Yet when you look at the history of Hill County you see a great diversity of people come together to live with a true sense of community and persevere through shared hardships. The area has seen the influence of homesteaders (both farmers and ranchers), the Chippewa Cree (our original residents), railroad workers, some of the first Chinese immigrants, soldiers at Fort Assiniboine, occasional bootleggers, and always our Canadian neighbors to the north.

My father emigrated to Havre from Italy in 1912 and began work on the Great Northern Railroad. Gino Preite excelled at the work, becoming a section foreman at the young age of 15. However, there remained one part of the old country that was greatly missed and he returned to Italy to marry my mother, Emeliella. I think my father fit into *the tough town* right from the start: he was a sparring partner for the famous Dempsey/Gibbons fight in Shelby and had a little local fame as a bear wrestler. He created a special technique to get the bear to the ground and forced a frustrated circus promoter to drop the challenge after Gino repeatedly won \$50 prizes at stops along the Hi-Line.

Equal to this fond memory is my mother's strong—and expansive—sense of community. We lived across the tracks in North Havre, and "Mama Preite" knew all of the neighbors and would host as many as one hundred people for her lasagna on Christmas Eve, arriving and departing in shifts to accommodate our small house. She would look after some of the desperate souls who would arrive in the boxcars, the proud men always volunteering to do a little work in the yard. When my brothers were in the Army in the Philippines and Korea, my mother could be found standing sentry at the front window until she saw her boys taking the familiar path home. Looking back, I suppose we were poor, but with clean clothes and my father's famous three-acre garden (which my mother transformed into the best Italian delights) we never knew it.

It was in Havre that I began my career in public service. At the age of six I hung posters for Franklin Roosevelt's re-election, using a little stool so that I could get them at adult eye level. It was in Havre that I learned the importance of being a good neighbor, as shopkeepers would take you in to warm up for a few minutes on your way to school on a minus forty degree day. It was in Havre that I learned what it meant to be part of a team and to do your part (even if those guys over in Shelby were shooting the ball better that night). And it was in Havre that I was able to learn the great lessons of life by the example my parents set for me. I disagree with that famous writer who said 'you can't go home again.' Your home is who you are, and Montana is home for all of us.



Gino and Emeliella Preite

TRACKING HAVRE'S ECONOMY

Authors: Chief Economist Brad Eldredge & Economist Tyler Turner

"Give me snuff, whiskey and Swedes, and I will build a railroad to hell,"

said James J. Hill, a Great Northern Railway financier. Hill's railroad turned Havre's central location in northern Montana into a trade and transportation hub for the State's hi-line region. The railroad industry has remained important to Hill County since the county's inception in 1912. According to the Railroad Retirement Board, Hill County had 505 railroad employees in 2003, more than any other Montana county, and accounted for 24% of Montana's total railroad employment.



Brad Eldredge

The University of Montana's Bureau of Business and Economic Research states that, besides rail transportation, Hill County's economy is based largely on agricultural production. The 2002 Census of Agriculture states that there are 836 farms in Hill County,

which is the seventh highest total in the state. Average net farm income was \$13,824, which ranked twenty-eighth overall. Hill County ranks second in Montana in total wheat acreage with over 444,014 acres in production. Nationally, the county is ranked third for total acres in wheat production. Ranching does not play as large a role as farming, with cow/calf numbers totaling only 22,210, ranking forty-first in Montana.

Before the Great Northern railroad spanned Montana's prairie, a frontier trading center called Bullhook Bottoms flourished on the Milk River, just a few miles outside Fort Assiniboine. With the arrival of Hill's railroad the Bottoms turned from a small trading center into a thriving economic hub for the region.

Through good times and bad, Havre's economy has endured. More than a century ago, an underground business district came to life beneath the streets after a devastating fire destroyed portions of the town. A variety of businesses chose to locate below ground, including a brothel, a Chinese laundromat, a saloon, a drugstore, at least three opium dens as well as rooms used for smuggling alcohol during prohibition. Over time the town was rebuilt and businesses returned to locations above the streets. Community icons such as Buttrey's Department Store and Montana's first radio station became synonymous with the local economy.

Today Havre's retail sector includes individual, private, corporate and franchised operations (as highlighted in Hill County's top 10 private employers). Havre's role as a retail trade center should be enhanced with the opening of a Wal-Mart Supercenter scheduled for 2007.

Projections from private research firms suggest that Hill County's economy will continue to grow in the future. NPA Data Service predicts that Hill County's population will remain stable over the next ten years. Global Insight expects that non-farm wage and salary employment will remain constant, while the standard of living of county residents will continue to increase.

The Burlington Northern & Santa Fe has a major rail yard in Havre, and is one of the largest private employers in the county with above average wages. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, railroad earnings average over \$69,000 per job. Interestingly, railroad employment in Hill County has remained stable while employment in the industry has continued to decline statewide. This provides further proof of the railroad's importance to the economy and its commitment to maintaining a strong presence in the region.

Havre's population was 9,460 according to 2004 Census Bureau estimates. This makes it the eighth largest city in the state and the largest in the hi-line region. Additionally, Hill County, with a population of 16,376, is the eleventh largest county in Montana and the largest in the hi-line region. Since 1912, population has shifted from the rural areas of the county to the city of Havre. Between 1920 and 1970 the city's share of the county population grew by almost 22%. Since 1970, Havre's share of the population has remained stable. Additionally, like many cities and counties in the region, population decline has been an unavoidable reality, with both Havre and Hill County losing residents since the 1960's.

While population declines generally indicate economic decline, other indicators show that there are bright spots in Hill County's economy. Real per capita personal income has increased 37% since 1980, indicating that the county's residents are enjoying growth in their standard of living. This was slightly below the State's per capita income growth rate of 43% over the same period. In absolute terms, the state's real per capita income (in 2000 dollars) is only \$783 higher than Hill County's.

GRADUATING A WORKFORCE

Author: Drea Brown

"Havre High graduate, Terry, had a slow start after high school. He began working at the local K-Mart part-time after graduation. After some hard experiences with life, Terry decided he needed to get his priorities straight. Terry requested more hours at work, started working harder, and is now the manager in the Sporting Goods Department." --- Job Specialist/Teacher, Fawn Thibodeaux.



JMG State Coordinator



Jobs for Montana's Graduates (JMG) began in 1990 as a solution to the dropout rates experienced in Montana's high schools. Today, JMG supports a network of 40 programs offering nearly 700 at-risk youth the potential for future career development by focusing on staying in school today. JMG is affiliated with the national organization Jobs for America's Graduates, as are 28 other states. One of the cornerstones of the program is that participants are drawn from the at-risk student body.

JMG provides classroom instruction and work-based learning opportunities to students (grades 9-12) that will enhance their career awareness, self esteem and work readiness. JMG assists school administrators in identifying young people who



Brittany is one of the few students who always knew exactly what she wanted to do and where she was going to do it. After graduating from SUNS, Brittany moved to Great Falls to attend Dahl's Cosmetology School. Brittany plans to finish up her required training and begin working this summer. JMG helped solidify her plans and give her the extra push of self-confidence she needed.

Would you like to help our students with your expertise and experience? If you are interested in becoming a partner with JMG, you can help by providing opportunities for:

- **Job shadowing**
- **Mentoring**
- **Mock interviews**
- **Information about careers**
- **Facility tours for students**
- **Service learning opportunities for students**
- **Participation at job fairs**
- **Scholarship and activity sponsorships**
- **A taxable donation to JMG's Foundation**

will benefit the most through career preparation. Students are provided long-term follow-up to facilitate a successful transition from school to work.

According to JMG's Foundation Director Lorilee Robinson, "The ultimate objective of JMG is for students to secure a quality job and/or postsecondary education, that leads into a meaningful career. We believe the best way to achieve this objective is to keep students in school through their graduation and to improve their rate of success and to acquire employability competencies before leaving high school."

Students participate in programs that encompass four employment competency areas of civic, leadership, career, and social to prepare them for the jobs of tomorrow. Participants have routinely exceeded program expectations. For example, the graduation rate of students in the program is 93.33% with 92.86% of those graduates employed, in the military or enrolled in further education.

Hill County welcomed the JMG program in 1992 and currently hosts three active JMG programs with 38 students at Rudyard's North Star High School, Havre High School and the Havre SUNS (Students United for New Success) Alternative High School.

For more information about JMG, please call State Coordinator Drea Brown at (406) 444-0978.

BUILDING CAREERS AT MSU NORTHERN

Author: Pam Harada

Already a leader in technology courses including diesel, automotive, design drafting and computer engineering, Montana State University-Northern in Havre added an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Plumbing in the fall of 2004.

"For decades most plumbing apprentices in Montana had to take their related training courses through out of state institutions," said Greg Kegel, Dean of Northern's College of Technical Sciences. "This resulted in nearly \$200,000 in yearly lost revenue to support the out of state correspondence classes."

Representatives of the plumbing industry approached MSU-Northern in 2003 and asked Northern to put together a program in plumbing. Not only did they ask, they helped with \$70,000 in start up funds and by working in an advisory group which includes master plumbers, members of Local Union 41, and the Montana Department of Labor and Industry Apprenticeship and Training Program.

The Coordinator of the Plumbing and Apprenticeship Training program is Bill Jellison, formerly the Bureau Chief for the state's Building Codes Bureau. "The first and second year plumbing classes have 24 students enrolled," said Jellison. "However, 170 plumbing apprentices are enrolled in correspondence courses with Northern."

Occupations related to plumbing technology include pipelayers, pipefitters, and plumbers. The plumbing industry in Montana averages 51 annual openings. The median hourly wage for plumbers in 2001 was \$21.28.

This fall, MSU- Northern will offer an Associate of Applied Science degree in Electrical Technology. Former electrical contractor, Terry Schend, was one of those instrumental in getting the program established. Schend is a member of the MSU-Northern Electrical Program Advisory Committee.



According to Schend, "The advantage is (an employer) can hire an employee who already has some prior experience, understands what the industry is about ...and can be a productive part of the business right off the bat." Schend believes the program, "will work and be good for Montana and the industry."

An employer can decide whether to grant part or all of a graduate's course work hours toward their required apprenticeship home study hours. Current electrical apprentices will choose if they want to take their correspondence courses from a school out of state or from Northern.

Northern continues to grow in other technology fields and its partnerships with industry. A new state of the art Applied Technology Center is set to officially open the spring of 2006. Businesses including Case New Holland and Toyota were instrumental in the success of this new building by donating funds and equipment.

Northern was recently awarded \$318,000 from the U.S. Dept. of Labor and plans to add a carpentry component to their technical curriculum as well. Kegel sees the benefits to Montana in all of these new course offerings. "There is no way to build an economic base without a qualified workforce," said Kegel.

For more information about Northern's technical sciences and other programs, visit www.msun.edu.



Mgr. Havre Job Service

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STUDENTS FOR HIRE

SMALL BUSINESS TRAINING WITH A FOCUS ON VETERANS

Author: Andrew Geiger

You may have heard that Montanans volunteer and serve in the military in greater numbers than most other states. A look at the numbers proves that this is indeed true. Figures from Census 2000 show that Montana has the second highest percentage of veterans, second only to Maine, and a new generation of Montanans is currently serving both in our country and around the world.

As a result, the Montana Department of Commerce implemented an outreach program to recruit individuals into the **NxLeveL Entrepreneur Course**. This exciting, hands-on practical approach to business development has already helped hundreds of small and expanding businesses all across the state. The course is designed to give the participant an opportunity to review their existing business or business plan with an eye towards marketing, operational control and financial planning.

"I always like to say that [NxLeveL] is kind of like the Wizard of Oz, but you don't just get to look behind the curtain, you get to learn to work the levers yourself."

-Lad Barney

NxLeveL is sponsored by local organizations in 19 locations throughout Montana. The thirteen-week course, offered once a week for three hours in the evening, is taught by local business leaders and includes area business owners as guest speakers. Lad Barney, the Director of the Small Business Development Center in Kalispell, explained that the inclusion of area small business leaders allows participants to get a sense of what the business climate they will be operating in is really like. "I always like to say that it is kind of like the Wizard of OZ, but you don't just get to look behind the curtain, you get to learn to work the levers yourself," Barney said.

Commerce Director Tony Preite explained that the Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) and *NxLeveL* are a great resource for anyone with a business idea, or existing business. "There's no need to go it alone. Getting technical advice from your area SBDC and enrolling in *NxLeveL* makes the world of difference as you start to meet with lenders and set financial goals for the first few benchmarks your business will face," Preite said. A recent performance audit from the Legislative Auditors concluded that businesses that have received this type of assistance are statistically more likely to stay solvent and have success.



Phillip Belangie

Philip Belangie, whose responsibilities include coordinating *NxLeveL* training, explained that there has been a big push to get the GI Bill to cover training expenses. The Veterans Administration recently certified the curriculum and training sites, granting the Montana Department of Commerce the responsibility of certifying instructors. Businesses, veteran service organizations and community groups are partnering to inform veterans of the opportunities. First Interstate bank has provided financial support, the American Legion is dedicating a column in its newsletter to business development, and the Procurement Technical Assistance Programs are planning workshops for veterans.

"I think the outreach to veterans is really exciting. In addition to the many veterans from earlier times, we know we have more than 7,000 Montanans who have served in hostile areas since 9/11," Belangie said. "Once they return to civilian life we want to make sure they are aware that they can use GI Bill funds to look at either starting a new career or taking stock of a current business venture. This funding should provide them a well earned opportunity to plan for the future."

RETURNING TO MAIN STREET

Author: Ann Desch

As we move along into the 21st Century, many of our historic main streets need a little assistance in returning to their original grandeur. Developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the 1970's, the Main Street America program provides a "four-point approach" to revitalizing downtowns. Main Street America focuses on comprehensive work in the four key areas of organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring. These four organizing principles guide community activities to breathe life back into the downtown. The approach also provides a community with a flexible framework for local public and private sector participants to make changes in their traditional commercial districts.

A key component of the program is historic preservation and reuse of heritage properties. Since 1980, more than 1,700 communities across the U.S. have established Main Street programs. Main Street organizing principles have resulted in success in many communities across the country, in part because of its common sense, community driven approach to revitalizing downtowns and neighborhood business districts.

The 59th Montana Legislature approved legislation to continue funding the **Main Street America Program**, providing financial assistance to local communities for improving downtown areas. The program, managed under the Montana Department of Commerce Business Resources Division, is funded for two years with gas tax



dollars. Two or three communities will be selected in April 2006 to participate in the Montana Main Street America program. Each will receive specific expertise, valued at \$25,000 to \$35,000, and tailored to fit individual community redevelopment needs.

Application materials were developed in fall 2005 and workshops were conducted by the National Trust in mid-December in Miles City, Lewistown and Stevensville. On January 3, 2006, thirteen communities submitted letters of intent to apply for state Main Street services. In addition, two communities have pursued downtown revitalization activities over the past several years and have requested to be certified as Main Street America Programs by the National Main Street Center.

Montana Department of Commerce intends to leverage resources both inside the Department and from other sources to maximize the limited dollars available. The two-track approach selects two communities to take advantage of the National Trust's Main Street Center consulting services and state technical assistance. Second, Commerce is looking for partnerships with communities that can demonstrate results in a condensed period of time. This approach provides general technical assistance to as many communities as possible with their community revitalization efforts.

The program provides hands-on assistance, and serves as a full-time advocate and development resource to communities. It promotes a return to community self-reliance, local empowerment, and rebuilding of historic commercial districts. For more information contact the Main Street America program Manager, 841-2747.



Main Street Photos by Robert C. Marvin

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BUSINESS CORNER

BUSINESS, EDUCATION, LABOR, GOVERNMENT COALITION

Author: Mark Maki

"In order to achieve the Governor's goals of raising wages and providing higher paying jobs in Montana, we must have a skilled and available workforce," said Labor and Industry Commissioner Keith Kelly, addressing the Labor-Business-Education Meeting held in Helena on January 31, 2006. "Collectively, we must become more involved with our education systems to maximize our scarce resources at the community level."

Forty-five people representing Montana's private, public, organized labor, and two-year educational institutions agreed that action must begin here and it must begin together to establish a collaborative articulation agreement among labor, business, education and government. Critical input must be cohesively delivered to assist in proposed training, skill craft, and development within our education system.

Mark Maki, Director of Apprenticeship and Training, actively researched models that Montana could emulate to achieve maximum results for our state Apprenticeship program. By invitation, guest speaker Nancy Mason, Washington State Apprenticeship Program Manager, presented effective and applied partnerships, projects and statutes that have enhanced Washington's workforce development.

"By developing standards of consistency, reciprocity of credits from apprentice to college can occur and many are in practice in Washington," said Mason. For example, in Washington state, a seven member regulatory council works directly with the State Workforce Investment Board and two-year institutions to provide critical input. "Our programs allow for direct entry and advanced placement for Job Corps program graduates, with heavy emphasis on actively recruiting women and minorities as apprentices."

Mason highlighted the Registered Code of Washington (RCW), the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) and an Executive Order promoting the use of apprentices in public works project.

"The Carpenter's Union believes that by opening up pathways between carpentry apprenticeship and two-year education, Montana can keep carpenters more effectively engaged in their trade," said Union Brother Jason Miller.

Dr. Arlene Parisot, from the Office of the Commissioner for Higher Ed, said that some states have begun to utilize the American Education Council to validate and provide credit for apprenticeship programs.

Rep. Eve Franklin of Great Falls mentioned the importance of helping potential workers identify interests, skills and abilities to match positions. "I've witnessed many examples of students who completed all of their nursing training, only to discover that the practical or applied portion of their training presented an aspect they were not able to cope with."

It was recommended that the Governor issue an executive order, similar to Washington's, to solicit involvement from independent contractors. All agreed that the first step was an articulation agreement that had standards of consistency clearly defined.

"This is the first time in 40-years that Montana has had a governor and commissioner so committed to developing an articulation agreement," said State Workforce Investment Board Chairman Dan Miles. "This is an opportunity not to be passed up."

*Mark Maki,
Supervisor,
Apprenticeship and
Training Program*



In her presentation, Nancy Mason highlighted the Registered Code of Washington (RCW), the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) and an Executive Order promoting the use of apprentices in public works project.

- Prevailing rate to be paid on public works for Apprenticeship workers (RCW 39.12.021).
- Exceptions to the requirement for public works contracts of one million dollars or more required to have at least fifteen percent of labor hours be performed by apprentices (RCW 39.04.320).
- Tuition waiver for basic skills and apprenticeships at community and technical colleges (State Board Resolution 04-03-03) and WAC 131-28-026), which was a 50% waiver.
- Recommendations of the state board for community and technical colleges (RCW 28B.50.880), which required that the community and technical colleges provide recommendations to the apprenticeship council and programs regarding matters related to instruction.
- Associate degree pathway (RCW 228B.50.890), which ensured that related and supplemental instruction from apprenticeship programs be credited toward the associate degree, and that related and supplemental instruction and other degree requirements were not redundant.
- Apprentice education waivers (RCW 28B.50.895), which stipulated that registered apprentices be able to deduct the college tuition owed from training contracts with the apprentice organizations.
- Tuition charges for certain ungraded courses (WAC 131-28-026), provided that the state board designate ungraded courses, which may be offered at tuition rates different from the standard rates.
- Registered apprentices or trainees (RCW 51.12.130) with the state apprenticeship council and participating in supplemental and related instruction classes were to have industrial insurance paid for by the state.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Author: Commissioner Keith Kelly

At the heart of every business is the relationship between employer and employee. The latest substantial employee reductions in businesses like Ford and GM are seldom translated into Montana terms, but their consequences have a significant affect in how society views employment relationships.

Recently the University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research hosted a workshop entitled, "Are We Open for Business?" The opening discussions highlighted Montana's legal environment as being "out of the mainstream" and thus allegedly hindering economic growth as compared to our neighboring states of Idaho, South Dakota and North Dakota. Criticisms arose for Montana being the "only state" that doesn't recognize at-will employment law. It was also noted that right to work states and states with employee noncompete agreements surround Montana. Workers' Compensation premiums and protection of Montana's environment were positioned as "uninviting" to future industry development.

The assertion was made that "Much of the economic growth in the United States has occurred in right to work states." The statement is misleading, in that economic growth has occurred in both right to work and union states. In fact, data from the U.S. Department of Labor suggests that right to work states tend to be ranked at the bottom for average annual wages. Right to work is the exact opposite of a cooperative economic policy. In order for Montana to grow, job creation strategies and sound economic development should be based on providing a skilled and stable workforce that attracts businesses that pay living wages, provide a safe working environment, and treat their workforce with dignity. Contrary to what was presented at the economic seminar, there is not a one-size fits all regarding state employment laws. A closer examination reveals various hybrids in our surrounding states. And rather than being the odd man out, our laws reflect Montana history. Apparently, this is working quite well as we continue to see some of the nation's strongest economic growth occurring in Montana's boot economy.¹

At-will employment laws were also positioned as economic bargaining power that "every state recognizes...with the exception of Montana." What I have found is that these laws were the result of a 1908 case in which the U.S. Supreme Court upheld "yellow dog" contracts forbidding workers from joining labor unions. Over the years, the law was modified to bar firings based on union affiliation, race, color, sex, national origin, use of Spanish language, age, and disability. As states have adopted the at-will employment law, they have also instituted a number of statutory exceptions including implied contracts, clearly defined policies in employee handbooks, good faith and fair dealing policies, public policy exceptions, and protection for

the more recent firings of whistle-blowers. Thus, it is more likely that Montana's laws are "in the mainstream" with our neighboring states.

The underlying question that begs to be asked --- Is the interest of the employee and employer naturally at odds with one another? I can remember a time when employees worked for one company their entire career, a time when individuals saw the success of their employer and family economic security as wedded. Not only did this not hurt business, it created the dynamics in which the United States emerged as the leading economic superpower.

As the presentation continues we hear from Bureau of Business and Economic Research Director Paul Polzin that "Strong economic growth continues in Montana." How can this be, if we are so rigid in our laws that major industry would rather set up shop elsewhere? Could it be that Montana's laws work for the majority of our businesses and that several of the issues raised are not that relevant to opening or expanding a business in Montana?

From 2001 to 2004 Montana's construction industry launched Montana's employment growth rate by 17.30%, a rate higher than surrounding states and the nation over the last three years. Idaho and South Dakota's growth was moderate at 5.30% and 7.98% respectively. Additionally, Montana was one of only two states in our region to experience increased employment (7.05%) in heavy and civil engineering construction. Idaho and South Dakota both experienced declines, with Idaho plummeting 17.25%.

Employment involves the creation of a contract. As with any contract, one hopes the terms are fair to both parties and that both parties prosper to the greatest degree possible. In the case of laws governing the employment relationship one also hopes they are fair in providing a safe working environment. As a former president of General Motors once famously said, "What's good for GM is good for the nation." What about when the times get tough and the true hardships are placed on American families? Might the modern day idea for our state be, "What's good for Montana's workers is good for Montana business."

As Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Industry, I pledge to continue as an active player in strengthening our economy for both Montana families and Montana businesses. I invite your comments and recommendations on how we show the rest of the nation that Montana is open for business.



Commissioner Keith Kelly

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OPEN FOR BUSINESS

¹ Montana's boot starts in Flathead, goes down through Missoula, turns through Gallatin and rounds out in Billings.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY & HEALTH TRAINING INSTITUTE

Effective Workplace Accident Investigation	Mar. 23	Gt. Falls
Reducing Ergonomic Injuries in the Workplace	Mar. 30	Helena
Reducing Ergonomic Injuries in the Workplace	Apr. 5	Billings
Effective Workplace Safety Management Systems	Apr. 6	Billings
Conducting Effective Workplace Safety Inspections	Apr. 7	Miles City
OSHA Fire Protection & Emergency Action Plans	Apr. 12	Billings
Hearing Conservation, Respiratory Protection & Other Occupational Health Requirements	Apr. 13	Billings
Hearing Conservation, Respiratory Protection & Other Occupational Health Requirements	May 4	Missoula
OSHA Fire Protection & Emergency Action Plans	May 5	Missoula
OSHA 10 Hr. General Industry	May 11-12	Billings
OSHA Forklift Operator Training Requirements	May 18	Butte
Understanding and Improving Indoor Air Quality in the Workplace	May 25	Billings



OSHA Confined Space Entry Requirements	June 7	Missoula
OSHA Welding & Compressed Gas Safety	June 8	Missoula
OSHA Welding & Compressed Gas Safety	June 15	Billings
Conducting Effective Workplace Safety Inspections	June 16	Billings
OSHA 10 Hr. General Industry	July 13-14	Kalispell
OSHA Forklift Operator Training Requirements	July 20	Billings
Effective Workplace Accident Investigation	Aug. 3	Bozeman
Conducting Effective Workplace Safety Inspections	Aug. 10	Helena
501 General Industry OSHA Train the Trainer	Aug. 21-25	Bozeman
Forklift Operator Training Requirements	Aug. 28	Gt. Falls
OSHA Trenching and Excavation Requirements	Sept. 21	Butte

For more information please contact (406) 444-6401, www.montanasafety.com

COMMUNITY SERVICE

The Governor's Office of Community Service hosts "The Community Building Institute," providing participants from across Montana with an opportunity to learn about the **community building process** through a series of workshops and hands-on instruction from some of Montana's most accomplished community organizers.

The curriculum for the event is provided by the Kansas University Workgroup for Community Health and Development. It represents some of the most comprehensive, cutting edge community organizing materials available. Training participants will receive seven KU module workbooks in addition to hands-on instruction regarding how to use the KU online community toolbox (<http://ctb.ku.edu/>).

The cost of the event is \$350.00, which includes seven KU workbooks, access to the resource room and meals through out the event. The next CBI in Montana will be August 22-24, location TBA.

For additional information, contact Shannon Stober at 406-444-1391, sstober@mt.gov

What's on Tap for Upcoming Events?



Pull Up a Stool — ABC Clinics

City	Date	Location	Sponsor	Phone	Fee
Billings	April 18	MSU Downtown Campus	MSU – Billings	896-5890	\$40
Livingston	April 19	Yellowstone Inn	Job Service (JSEC)	222-0520	\$35
Kalispell	May 3	Outlaw Hotel	Chamber of Commerce	758-2800	\$45
Bozeman	May 17	Best Western Gran Tree	Chamber of Commerce	586-5421	\$35/50*
Helena	May 23	Red Lion Colonial	Chamber of Commerce	447-1941	\$40/50*
Glasgow	June 13	Cottonwood Inn	Chamber of Commerce	228-2222	\$25/35*
Sidney	June 14	Elks Lodge	Chamber of Commerce	433-1916	\$25/35*
Miles City	June 15	VA Medical Center	Chamber of Commerce	234-2890	\$30
Havre	June 27	Great Northern Inn	Chamber of Commerce	265-4383	\$30
Cut Bank	June 28	Glacier Electric	Cut Bank Chamber/JSEC	873-2191	\$30
Butte	September 13	Red Lion	Chamber of Commerce	723-3177	\$35

*Higher prices indicated are for participants that are not current chamber members and ** are for 2 or more persons attending.

Hail, Hail the Gang's all Here at the BASH and SMASH Free Seminars

Bozeman Area Safety and Health (BASH) @ Bozeman Deaconess Hospital

April 14	Ladder and Scaffolding Safety
May 12	Back Safety & Health/Basic Ergonomics
June 9	Confined Space
July 14	Meth Lab Information
August 11	Accident Investigation

Contact: Kevin Babcock 587-5111

Southwestern Montana Area Safety & Health (SMASH) @ Gold Rush Casino in Butte

April 13	Ergonomics
May 11	Workplace Safety

Contact: Tina Smollak 723-2141

Last Call

Planning an Effective Wellness Program May 17 & 18 at Hilton Garden Inn, Bozeman, call: 947-2344

Workplace Privacy and Employee Monitoring Brown Bag April 14 at The Summit, Kalispell, call: 758-6241

Business Expansion and Retention (BEAR) Brown Bag May 10 at The Summit, Kalispell, call: 758-6241

Governor's Conference on Worker's Compensation and Occupational Safety & Health September 6-8, at Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort, West Yellowstone, call: 444-6527 /for hotel reservations: 1-800-646-7365

Missoula Job Fair, April 27 at UM-College of Technology, call: 728-7060

Check out our extended menu of events on
<http://app.mt.gov/cal/event?calendar>

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